Two Spheres: Human and Divine

Thrust Statement: **God wants every person to choose the divine rather than the human.**

Scripture Reading: **Ephesians 1:1-3**

As one reads the Book of Ephesians, one cannot help but wonder about the reaction of those who received this book about the unfolding of God's plan of salvation for humanity—a salvation planned before the beginning of creation (**Ephesians 1:4**). What does this book mean to you? Does the word *saint* capture your attention? What does the expression "faithful in Christ Jesus" mean to you? Have you picked up on the various phrases concerning one's relationship to Christ? What does "in Christ," "in Him," "in Christ Jesus," and "through Christ Jesus" convey to you? How many times does the word *faith* occur in this short epistle? How many times does the word *saints* occur in this epistle? What does the "riches of God's grace" express to you (**1:7**)?

If one is to fully grasp the significance of this book, one should reflect upon the above questions and seek to examine the significance of the words that Paul utilizes as he seeks to capture the grandeur of God's grace. One cannot read the Book of Ephesians without a consciousness of two spheres—the human and the divine. In this book, Paul paints a picture of both sides of the coin. Every Christian operates in two spheres—the earthly and the spiritual, that is to say, the visible and the invisible. A consciousness of the spiritual gives power to deal with the carnal. An awareness of God's grace promotes good behavior within every one who has been consecrated to the service of God. Even thought every believer lives in this world, nevertheless his or her citizenship is in heaven (**Philippians 3:20**).

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS 1:1-3

> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: [2] Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3] Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.[1]

Paul: The Author (1:1)

The author identifies himself as "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ." The Greek name of Paul is Παυ'λö (Paulos, "small or little"), but his Hebrew name is lWav* (v*aWl), which is translated into Greek as Σαυ'λö (Saulos) and into English as Saul (**Acts 9:1**). Since Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin (**Philippians 3:5**), one can assume that he was named after the first king of Israel (**1 Samuel 9**). Prior to Paul's call to discipleship, Luke gives information that indicates that Paul (Saul) was a part of an antichristian movement in Jerusalem (**Acts 9:1-2**). After Paul's first missionary journey, he wrote to the churches he had established in the province of Galatia concerning his fight against Christians (AD 48). He writes: "For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. [14] I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers (**Galatians 1:13-14**).

As a devoted rabbi, Paul unleashed his hatred for the people of the Way. Paul's zeal for the traditions of his forefathers was so strong that he went to the high priest to obtain letters to the synagogues of Damascus to carry out his covert operation of persecution. (**Acts 9:1-2**). While on his way to wreak havoc among God's people (saints, αΣγιψοϊ Jagiois, "set apart ones"), the Lord Jesus appeared to him on his way to Damascus to arrest men and women who professed faith in Christ (**9:3-19**). As a result of this encounter with the risen Lord, Paul became an apostle to the Gentiles. Luke gives the following account: "But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. [16] I will show him how much he must suffer for my name'" (**9:15-16**).

Later, we find Paul in Antioch ministering to the Lord. The New International Version (NIV) gives the following account that led to the three missionary journeys of Paul:

> In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. [2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." [3] So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (**Acts 13:1-3**).

The words *worshiping the Lord* is translated from the Greek words λειτουργουψντων τω' κυριψω leitourgountwn tw kuriw, which is best translated as "ministering to the Lord." At first glance, one might consider the phraseology—worshiping the Lord—as depicting a so-called worship service as is generally practiced within the Christian community. But this "worshiping the Lord" was simply the activities carried out by individuals who were proclaiming the Good News of God's Way of salvation. As far as the record in Luke is concerned, Paul conducted three missionary journeys. According to Luke, Paul stayed in Ephesus for at least two years (**Acts 19:10**) and preached Jesus as the Way (**19:9**).

Several years later, after this work of two years in Ephesus, Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus (AD 60) from his prison confinement in Rome. He spoke of this incarceration three times in this brief epistle:

> For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles (**Ephesians 3:1**).
> As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received (**4:1**).
>
> Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should (**6:19-20**).

Even though Paul faced death, he never forgot his mission—an obligation to preach Jesus and to teach them the Word of the Lord and to build up the Ephesians in the faith. Paul expresses it this way:

> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, [12] to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [13] until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. [14] Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming (**4:11-14**).

Paul wanted to share with them the great truths that he taught throughout his ministry. In closing this epistle, he writes out of his deep love for their welfare:

> [21] Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. [22] I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. [23] Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [24] Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love (**6:21-24**).

As stated above, this letter was written from Rome. During this period of incarceration, Paul wrote four letters—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. In the Ephesian epistle, Paul sets forth the very essence of God's Good News by unfolding what had been hidden in ages past (**3:9**). Paul speaks of that which had been kept hidden in the past as the "mystery of his will" (**1:9**). If one wishes to understand the "mystery of God" that Paul develops in Ephesians, one should approach this book with the intent of understanding God's plan of salvation (Jesus Christ) that God had decreed even before He spoke this universe into existence (**1:4**). Paul employs several synonymous expressions to call attention to the wonder of it all—"mystery of his will" (**1:9**), "administration of God's grace" (**3:2**), "mystery of Christ" (**3:4**), "administration of this mystery" (**3:9**). Just a casual reading reveals that Christ is this mystery (see also **Colossians 1:25-27**). In fact, in the Colossian letter, Paul goes right to the heart of what the "mystery of his will" was all about:

> Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. [25] I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—[26] the mystery that has

been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. [27] To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. [28] We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. [29] To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me (**Colossians 1:24-29**).

The Assembly in Ephesus: Saints (1:1b)

After Paul's introduction of himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, he addresses the believers as "saints." Today, the use of the word *saint* carries the idea of perfection—one that is far above others in morality. But Paul did not employ the word *saint* in this sense, even though it also represents the moral purity to which a person is called (**1:4**). In fact, every believer is a "saint" in the sense that he or she has been set apart for God. The primary meaning of the word *saint* has reference to dedication of service, that is, a people set apart for the Lord. This concept is the very reason that Christians are described as "a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (**2:21**). Again, the word *saint* is from the Greek word ἁγιö Jagios, which means "set apart" by God, that is, "consecrated" for service in His kingdom. When one puts his or her trust in Christ, God takes this person and transfers him or her into the body of Christ (**Colossians 1:13-14**). As a result of this transaction, every Christian's body becomes a part of the temple of God. Not only do Christians experience this transaction, but they also have the Holy Spirit taking up His dwelling in them—each individual person (**Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 3:16**). Since God has set each person apart as a result of his or her trust in Christ, then one ought to live a life that portrays a consecrated life to God (**Ephesians 4:17—5:20; Colossians 3:1-4**).

Listen to Paul as he stresses this point in his letter to Corinth: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; [20] you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**). In spite of living in a decadent society, such as Ephesus, they were still saints while going about their daily activities—sailing, fishing, tent making, selling goods, shop keeping, building, raising children, and so on. They were "saints" because they were "in Christ." Whenever one reflects upon this word *saint*, one can only celebrate the miracle of God's grace. It is in this vein that Paul shouts, as it were, the following words:

> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9] not by works, so that no one can boast. [10] For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (**Ephesians 2:8-10**).

The Assembly in Ephesus: Faithful (1:1b)

Faithful: Faith in Christ

In **verse 1 of chapter 1**, Paul speaks of "the saints in Ephesus" and "the faithful in Christ Jesus." The word *faithful* (πιψστö pistos, "faithful" or "believer") is not easy to translate.[2] Some scholars translate this word (faithful) as an adjective and

others as a noun. Having said this, it appears, at least to me, that the "faithful" are those who have exercised faith in the Gospel and have allowed the Gospel to reshape their behavior. Have you allowed the Gospel to reshape your behavior? The essence of faith centers on the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian is full of faith. Are you full of faith? Every Christian believes that Jesus is the One He claimed to be—the Son of God. He or she believes that Jesus is the only one who came from the Father and that Jesus is the One who became flesh and made His dwelling among us (**John 1:14**). He or she believes that Jesus was born of a virgin (**Matthew 1:22-23**). Also, every saint believes that Jesus came into this world in order that "he might taste death for every man" (**Hebrews 2:9**). Every child of God is always conscious that "Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (**1 Peter 3:18**). Lloyd Jones says that the word *faithful* means, "to be full of faith, to exercise faith."[3] One cannot be a Christian and not believe certain things.

Faithful: Ethical Behavior

A Christian is not just one who is good morally, but rather, one who has put his or her trust in Jesus as the Savior of the World. One cannot separate one's Christian faith from one's Christian life. This famous epistle contains not only doctrine, but it also contains duty. For one to be faithful in the true sense of the term, one must put into practice Paul's admonition toward the latter part of this epistle (**Ephesians 4:17—5:20**). Christians are to live lives worthy of their calling (**4:1-3**). God has created a new humanity; this new humanity consists of those who have responded to God's grace. This new humanity and this new creation is the work of God (**2:10**). Since every child of God is a "saint," then every Christian must have a new set of loyalties and a new set of agendas. God's "saints" belong to a different kingdom—a spiritual kingdom devoted to proclaiming Jesus as God's Way of reconciling the world unto Himself (**2 Corinthians 5:17-21**). One is saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is not alone. One is saved by grace through faith (**Ephesians 2:8**). Paul develops this grace by unraveling the "mystery" (μυστηψριον musthvrion, "secret") of God in **1:3-14**. An unfolding of this mystery should result in one putting his or her trust in Christ. Whenever one responds to God's grace, one ought to live a life that portrays a consecrated life to God.

Grace and Peace (1:2)

As stated above, God has created a new humanity; this new humanity consists of those who have responded to God's grace. Since every child of God is a "saint," then every Christian must refocus his or her devotion and develop a new to-do list to bring honor to God. God's "saints" belong to a different kingdom—a spiritual kingdom devoted to proclaiming Jesus as God's Way of reconciling the world unto Himself. One is saved by faith alone, but one should remember that the faith that saves is not alone. One is saved by grace through faith. Paul develops God's way of salvation by unfolding the mystery of God in **1:3-14.** The words *grace* and *peace* overshadow this short epistle. Paul begins this epistle by saying: "Grace (χαψρϊ caris) and peace (ειϛρηψνη eirhnh) to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (**1:2**).

Grace

Grace represents God's saving initiative. God took the initiative to reconcile sinful humanity unto Himself in His new community. One can witness the awe of Paul as he sought to write to the Ephesians about this matchless love of God: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [5] made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (**2:5**). Paul cannot stop with just this statement; he continues with penetrating words about the Gospel of peace: "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, [7] in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (**2:6-7**). Paul cannot stop expressing his consciousness of God's rich grace. Again, he writes: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9] not by works, so that no one can boast" (**2:8-9**). The word *grace* appears eleven times in this epistle.[4]

Peace

This Gospel of grace is a Gospel of peace. Paul employs the word *peace* (ειϛρηψνη eirhnh) eight times in Ephesians.[5] He begins with the word *peace* (**1:2**) and concludes with the word *peace* (**6:24**). In chapter six, he also refers to the Gospel as the "Gospel of peace" (**6:15**). Paul, as he begins to unravel the "mystery" of God's will, makes a bold statement about Jesus: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, [15] by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations" (**2:14-15a**). But he does not stop with this startling statement, he continues by saying: "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, [16] and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (**2:15b-16**). How did God make peace with sinful humanity? Paul says that God did this through "the cross" of Jesus. The following chart illustrates Paul's emphasis upon grace and peace as he began and ended this epistle:

Ephesians 1:2	Ephesians 6:23-24
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.	Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [24] Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

As one reads this epistle, one quickly observes that Paul does not use these words lightly and loosely and thoughtlessly. It is not just a mere formula. These two words convey the endless riches showered upon humanity "in and through Jesus." This second verse in chapter one (see chart above) is an overview of the entire epistle. In the words of Lloyd Jones: "Grace is the beginning of our faith; peace is the end of our faith. Grace is the fountain, the spring, the source."[6] As one reflects upon these two words, one can grasp something of God's love as it is played out in the cross of Jesus. In grace, one witnesses God's condescending love. In Grace, one witnesses God coming down to redeem sinful humanity. Yes, it is in grace that one witnesses God stooping down to reconcile men and women unto Himself.

Peace is the ultimate goal of the cross of Jesus. This peace is not the absence of troubles in the lives of God's people (**John 15:27; Philippians 3:7**). This peace is a

peace that brings together two parties that are separated from one another. The cross of Jesus not only brought peace between God and humanity, but it also brought about peace between Jew and Gentile: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (**2:14**). When one desires grace and peace from God, one understands that God has disclosed the truth about his creation. In this short epistle, Paul is telling his readers what they need—grace and peace. Without acceptance of God's grace and peace "in and through Jesus," one is separated from God. Listen to Paul as he seeks to capture a life without God "in and through Jesus":

> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)— [12] remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ (**2:11-13**).

In Christ Jesus (1:1b)

Are you "in Christ Jesus" or are you outside Christ? According to Holy Scripture, men and women find themselves in a miserable state as a result of sin. Were it not for God's grace, one would find himself or herself without hope and without God in the world. Throughout Scripture, GRACE is the answer to man's dilemma. It is only through grace that one can find peace with God. Grace from God is unmerited and undeserved; it is a condescending love. In the Book of Ephesians, Paul introduces the Gospel of God with grace. Grace introduces the entire Gospel. This is what the Gospel is all about. Do you want peace with God? If so, one can only find this peace "in and through Jesus." At the cross of Jesus, grace and peace kissed each other. This message of Ephesians began with emphasis upon two spheres—human and divine. Paul writes with glowing words about the divine: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms (εϛν τοῖ εϛπουρανιψοϊ en tois epouraniois) with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (**1:3**). God is the source of our spiritual blessings.

In Christ (1:3)

As one peruses the Book of Ephesians, one quickly discovers that Christ is the very heart and core of this magnificent book. These spiritual blessings are found only "in Christ." The phrase "in Christ" occurs **fourteen times** in Ephesians.[7] In this epistle, Paul calls attention to the place of spiritual blessings—"in Christ." To illustrate where salvation occurs, Paul also utilizes the phrase "in Christ Jesus" **eight times**.[8] Again, Paul emphasizes the sphere of salvation with another phrase, "in Him." This phrase occurs **nine times** in eight verses.[9] Paul uses another phrase to also capture the place of spiritual blessings that are bestowed upon individuals—"through Christ Jesus." This phrase appears only **once** in this epistle.[10] All of these expressions are synonymous terms to describe the spiritual position of every believer. Every Christian is identified with Christ. Since every believer is in Christ, he or she is able to draw on the wealth of Christ for his or her own daily living.

Christ/Messiah (1:1)

Since Christ is the "mystery" of God in the Book of Ephesians, one discovers that the title "Christ" floods the magnificent book. The title Christ (Χριστοψ Cristos, "Anointed One" = the Hebrew word j^yv!m* m*v!,^j appears forty-nine times in the Book of Ephesians. This title occurs twelve times in the first chapter.[11] The name Jesus (Ιςησου Ihsous = the Hebrew word u^Wvy} y@vWu^) appears twenty times in this book. Just in the first chapter alone, the name Jesus appears seven times.[12] Christians are in Christ. It is "in" and "through" Jesus Christ that the new community of God has come into being (**2:14-22**). The title Christ dominates Paul's mind as he writes this book. It is "in Him" (εςν ω/ en Jw, "in whom" {KJV]) that God has chosen us even before He created the world (**1:4**). It is "in Him" (en Jw) that God has redeemed us through His blood (**1:7**). It is "in Him" (en Jw) that every believer is marked with a seal—the promised Holy Spirit (**1:13**). It is "through" (διαψ dia) Jesus Christ that God adopts children of wrath as His sons and daughters (**1:5**). It is "in Him" (en Jw) that God effects predestination and election (**1:11**). It is "in the one he loves" that forgiveness of sins is received (**1:6**).

CONCLUSION

No one out of Him will be saved. This preposition "in" (εςν en) is one of the most important words in the New Testament. What does it really mean to be saved? It simply means to be "in Christ" (εςν Χριστω en Cristw) One can hardly reflect upon the propositional phrase, "in Christ," without recalling the words of Jesus to His disciples: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (**John 15:4**). Every believer is in Christ and Christ is in the believer. Can I explain this? No! In order for one to bear fruit, one must be in Him. The "mystery" of God revolves around this great truth—salvation is in Him (εςν αυςτω en autw).

Do you want to experience God's grace and peace? If so, you can only take advantage of these two blessings "in" and "through" Christ. He is our peace. He is the mystery that Paul develops in the Book of Ephesians. Jesus is God's Way of salvation. It is only "in Him" that one can receive the forgiveness of sins. It is only in Him that one can receive adoption into God's family. Which sphere are you in? Are you in Christ or are you out of Christ? Are your thoughts focused on the human or on the divine? Are you laying up treasures on earth or are you laying up treasures in heaven (**Matthew 6:19-21**)? Are you trying to serve God and Satan at the same time (**6:24**)? Where is your delight (**Psalm 1:2**)? Is it in God or worldly things (**Joshua 24:15**)? Are you concerned about Christ, the hope of glory (**Philippians 3:7-11; Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:1-3**)?

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[1] All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984), unless stated otherwise.

[2] See William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians* in *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 70, footnote 11.

[3] Lloyd Jones, *God's Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians 1:1 to 23* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 29.

[4] Ephesians 1:2, 6, 7; 2:5, 7, 8; 3:2, 7, 8; 4:7; 6:24.

[5]Ephesians 1:2; 2:14, 15, 17 (2 times); 4:3; 6:15; 6:23.

[6] Lloyd Jones, *An Exposition of Ephesians 1:1 to 23*, 36.

[7] 1:1, 3, 9, 12, 13, 20; 2:6, 7, 10, 13; 3:6, 11, 21; 4:32 (NIV).

[8] 1:1; 2:6, 7, 10, 13; 3:6, 11, 21 (NIV).

[9] 1:4, 7, 11, 13; 2:21, 22; 3:12 (two times); 4:21 (NIV).

[10] 1:5.

[11] 1:1 (2 times), 2, 3 (2 times), 5, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 20.

[12] 1:1 (2 times), 2, 3, 5, 15, 17.